

3. Understanding the Cross:

(Part 3) The Virtue of the Cross

a) Key Scriptures

1 John 2:1-2

1 John 4:4

2 Peter 1:3

1 Peter 2:24

b) Introduction

Satan wants us to live in unbelief and despair and to stop believing that the Father can meet our needs. But God has established His promises and principles in the cross of Calvary. If God failed to sustain His people and meet them at every point of spiritual, physical and material need, He would be denying the work He has accomplished through His Son Jesus (2 Corinthians 8:9). There are four areas in which we need to see the finished work of Christ: forgiveness, provision, victory and healing.

c) The Virtue of Forgiveness

Self condemnation is a common feature of our human experience. Many Christian believers suffer from condemnation of spirit. The reality of daily failures in our walk with God, and the pressure of our interaction with other people every day often lead to feelings of unworthiness and inadequacy. Forgiveness is a fact from God's point of view. In Christ, He has covered all our sins and when we come to Him in repentance and confession He never fails to cleanse us and give us that sense of freedom and freshness which is our right, through the death of our Saviour. But the devil never likes to leave it there. He loves to play on our feelings of weakness and tries to lead us back into condemnation and bondage within our hearts. This is where we need to receive our forgiveness. Satan tries to convince us that, in some way, we need to pay for our sins. But this is a total contradiction to the teaching of Scripture and to the work of Calvary. Jesus has met all our debt and we need to receive our forgiveness in Him (1 John 1:7-9). We have a Saviour who is at the moment speaking to the Father on our behalf. As we open our mouths and ask forgiveness, He is naming our names before our heavenly Father.

d) The Virtue of Provision

The devil doesn't mind us believing in God, as long as He is a God who does nothing. Satan's aim is to break the relationship of trust in God which the Holy Spirit brings to life when we are born again through His power. It is by the Spirit that we know God as our Father, and it is through Him that we come to God our Father in simple trust and faith (Romans 8:15-16). "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all - how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things." (Romans 8:32). Every time we struggle with a sense of need we should come back to Calvary. After Jesus every other provision is only a footnote! All we ever need is included in Him, and through faith in Him we know that release of His provision into our lives day by day.

e) The Virtue of Victory

In His death, Jesus accomplished victory for us over sin, death, the world and the power of Satan, the great enemies that haunt the footsteps of every human being. Satan continually tries to bring us into defeat and weakness through these means. We need to be clear about our victory in Jesus, so that we can overcome Satan in his attacks upon our lives. Jesus has won for us victory over sin and death (Romans 5:12,15). The two great weapons of Satan, guilt and fear, are thus rendered useless in the life of the Christian who stands on the finished work of the cross. Jesus has won for us victory over the world. The world is that satanic system of evil which has permeated God's order and the society of mankind, which leads men and women into darkness and away from God. But because of the finished work of Christ on the cross, in which He overcame the principles and powers of this dark world, we can share His victory in the present power of the Holy Spirit (1 John 5:4-5). He has won for us victory over Satan. The cross was, in fact, the cataclysmic battle between the power of God and the power of Satan. Everything that flows to us out of the cross, does so because Jesus won the victory. That victory was not won in some dark and secret corner but in a public arena for all to see. When Jesus cried out, "It is finished.", He was not crying out in weakness or despair, but proclaiming publicly the mighty victory of God. In Jesus, God has overcome all the powers of darkness so that they no longer pose a threat to those who stand in faith in Christ Jesus (Colossians 2:13-1s).

f) The Virtue of Healing

The universal gift that comes to mankind from the cross is the gift of salvation in the sense of forgiveness of sins. However, the cross of

Calvary is also the basis for every other provision the Father can and will give us according to His will. This includes healing. There are factors which control whether these provisions will be given in every case, e.g. when we need to exercise more faith, or when our lives inhibit the Father from being as generous as He wants to be. There are also other hidden factors. However, this should not stop us praying in faith or asking the Father for help in every time of need. We can trust the Lord but we cannot manipulate Him (Deuteronomy 29:29). Three major facts show that healing of the body is an integral part of the Father's purpose in the work of Calvary.

(i) God has established the principle of healing in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus died bruised and broken but He was raised healed and whole.

(ii) The Scriptures clearly witness to the inclusion of physical healing as a part of the work of Calvary (Romans 8:11). Jesus died, not only to bear our sins, but to carry our sorrows and take up our infirmities (Isaiah 53:4-5; 1 Peter 2:24). Jesus died, not only to save our souls, but our whole man: spirit, soul and body.

(iii) The direct testimony of healing today in the power of the Holy Spirit: God's purpose is that we should live now in the goodness and power of eternal life.

The fact is that the cross was the decisive encounter in the battle between good and evil. There Satan was finally stripped of his power and his fate was conclusively sealed. Yet there is still a war going on! Similarly the decisive work has been accomplished for our healing but we are not yet fully healed. Every miracle of God's grace is a miracle of promise. It is a type or pointer to what will fully pertain when Jesus comes in His Kingdom glory. The fact that the battle is won and yet not over does not inhibit us from engaging in spiritual warfare at every level today. Rather, it should stimulate us. So it is with the question of healing, for surely this is part of the battle! We should not be inhibited from praying just because we realise that everything is not yet perfect.

g) Six Reasons Why We Fail to Receive Our Healing

(i) Some people do not have faith in God for their healing (James 5:15).

(ii) Personal unconfessed sin creates a barrier to God's grace (James 5:16).

(iii) Persistent and widespread disunity, sin and unbelief in bodies of believers and families inhibit healing in individual members of the body (1 Corinthians 11:30).

(iv) Because of incomplete or incorrect diagnosis of what is causing their problems, people do not know how to pray correctly.

(v) Some people assume that God always heals instantly, and when He does not heal immediately they stop praying.

(vi) Some people are looking in the wrong direction for their healing. It is important to hear the word of God with regard to the healing process. Some will have a direct supernatural touch of God for their healing but others will receive relief and health through medical or surgical help. Remember, not all healing comes from God, so it is important for us to exercise the gift of discernment when it comes to these deep areas of life.

h) Conclusion

Nowhere is unconditional love more fully expressed than in the cross (1 John 4:10). We need to be encouraged to come as children to our heavenly Father. He knows what is best for us. We need to come to the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16). God has made provision for us in every area through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 8:32).

i) Questions and Discussion Points

1. Why do many Christians feel condemned, unworthy and inadequate? Discuss.
2. What provision has God made for us to rid us of condemnation and what do we need to do? (1 John 1:7-9).
3. Is the sacrifice that Jesus made sufficient to meet all our needs?
4. Where is Satan in relation to us and how much power do we have available to us when we are in Christ? (Ephesians 1:17-23).

5. Read and discuss the six reasons why we fail to receive our healing and compare these with the three major facts showing that our healing is an integral part of the work of Jesus on the cross.

j) Summary and Application

1. God has promised to meet every spiritual, physical and material need for all His people because of the work of Jesus on the cross.
- Z. God's children should be free from condemnation as they have available to them the forgiveness of God.
3. God has promised to meet all our needs according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19).
4. Jesus has won for us the victory over sin, death, the world and the power of Satan by His work on the cross.
5. Healing of the body is an integral part of our heavenly Father's purpose in the work of Jesus on the cross of Calvary.